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NSC FOR ADAM STERLING

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BASESCU TO AMBASSADOR: "A BLACK DAY FOR ROMANIAN DEMOCRACY"

REF: BUCHAREST 453

Classified By: Ambassador Nicholas Taubman for 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a telephone conversation after the parliamentary suspension vote April 19, President Basescu told Ambassador that he was "probably" not going to honor his pledge to resign immediately if he were suspended. Basescu cited current press speculation that the PSD, PNL, and other anti-Basescu parties were planning to change the referendum law to prevent suspended Presidents from running for re-election as the reason. (note: Prime Minister Tariceanu in press remarks declared that Basescu's resignation would be a recognition of his personal mistakes, and said that he hoped that Basescu understood that he no longer has the "moral right" to run for President again.) Basescu said that both PSD head Geoana and Prime Minister Tariceanu were in the thrall of oligarchs and other "economic forces" who were threatened by his reform agenda. Basescu added bitterly, "at least Vadim Tudor and Dan Voiculescu were sincere..."

¶2. (C) Basescu said that crowds were already gathering in University Square in Bucharest and in other cities including Timisoara and Arad. He told the Ambassador that he wanted to stress that he had not called for these demonstrations and that they were entirely spontaneous. Basescu said that he would shortly address the demonstrators and ask them to go home peacefully.

¶3. (C) Basescu said that he remained convinced that he would win the referendum and would regain his office within 30 days. Asked by the Ambassador what might ensue during the 30-day suspension period, Basescu predicted that the first thing that acting President Vacaroiu will do will be to fire the Prosecutor General and the head of the National Anti-Corruption Agency (DNA). Prosecutors' activities had created "discomfort" in many quarters, including with oligarchs Dan Voiculescu and Dinu Patriciu, as well as with PSD leaders Nastase and Iliescu. Basescu said that the Iliescu "file" was more or less "finalized", and that Iliescu was on the verge of being accused of crimes connected with events that took place in 1990. (Note: Basescu did not specify, but he may have been referring to the miners' rampage in 1990.)

¶4. (C) Asked whether his opponents would actually agree to holding a referendum within 30 days, Basescu replied, "according to the constitution, yes, but these guys don't respect the constitution...". He noted that the constitution specified a parliamentary response to his call for a vote on creating uninominal electoral districts within 30 days, but over 60 days had elapsed with no answer.

¶5. (C) Basescu concluded the call by remarking that it was a

"black day" for Romanian democracy. He said that he had just spoken with the President of the Constitutional Court, and that he had told him that the constitution specified that a President could only be suspended if he infringed upon the constitution. Since the Court had already found that he had not violated the constitution, what took place today was pure politics. What this meant, said Basescu, was that from now on, Parliament can remove an elected President at any time, if the President loses his parliamentary majority. It meant that there was no longer a "free President" since all future Presidents will have to constantly negotiate with the political parties in parliament in order to stay in office.

¶6. (C) Comment: President Basescu's decision to opt for the 30-day suspension option over resigning and calling for new Presidential elections may turn out to be the wiser course of action. The Constitutional Court has already rejected two proposed laws that would have lowered the electoral threshold for permanently removing a President through referendum, and Prime Minister Tariceanu's comments about Basescu losing the "moral right" to stand as a candidate also suggests that Parliament would have thrown up new roadblocks to his candidacy. His intention to tell demonstrators to go home peacefully is also a good move, especially given concerns that any attempt to mobilize a "people power" scenario right now could escalate out of control or -- more likely -- be hijacked by extremist elements attempting to discredit him.
End Comment.

TAUBMAN